

IS WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP IMPORTANT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR- TAKE PRESCHOOL TEACHER IN TAINAN AS SAMPLES

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ABSTRACT

Preschool educators play a vital role in the preschool education system. Therefore, it is very important to know the working conditions of preschool education and the influential factors of its personnel's attitude and behavior. According to the literature review, it is found that emotional exhaustion has a negative impact on organizational citizenship behavior, and workplace friendship has a moderating effect on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, this study used preschool teachers in Tainan, Taiwan as samples to investigate the relationship between emotional exhaustion, workplace friendship and organizational citizenship behavior of individuals (OCBI). In this study, 307 valid questionnaires were collected by using the convenience sampling method. The study found the following points: 1. Emotional exhaustion has a negative impact on OCBI; 2. Workplace friendship has a positive impact on OCBI; 3. Workplace friendship has moderating effect on some relationships between emotional exhaustion and OCBI. Finally, some relevant management suggestions were proposed.

Keywords: Emotional Exhaustion, Workplace Friendship, OCBI, Preschool Teacher

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the "Enforcement Rules of Early Childhood Education and Care Act" was proclaimed and the preschool education industry in Taiwan began the transformation because of the government's plan. Since January 1, 2012, the integration of kindergarten and childcare organization officially launched. Afterwards, kindergartens became more diversified. The operators of kindergarten needed to have more comprehensive plans and marketing positioning to provide multiple services in order to fulfil different needs of parents. Although the government has invested a lot of policies to diversify the business model of kindergartens and ensure the employment environment of preschool education practitioners, the employment environment for kindergartens still needs to be improved. Due to various factors and considering the future of the preschool education industry, many preschool teachers choose to switch career domain. The demand for kindergartens in densely populated or relatively high-income areas has greatly increased. Parents require service quality to focus on teaching courses since they hope to cultivate children's multi-faceted abilities. Therefore, more and more competitive pressure on private kindergartens in operation in Taiwan [1].

Consequently, the main purposes of this study are:

1. To understand the current self-evaluation level of emotional exhaustion, workplace friend and OCBI of the preschool teachers in Tainan City, Taiwan.
2. To investigate the relationship between emotional exhaustion, workplace friendship and OCBI.

3. To investigate the moderating effect of workplace friendship on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and OCBI.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Content of Emotional Exhaustion, Workplace Friendships and OCBI

In the studies of burnout, emotional exhaustion is a famous component [2]. Leiter and Maslach [3] described emotional exhaustion as the core element of burnout. Emotional exhaustion is conceived as the feelings of being emotionally over extended and tired due to one's occupation [4]. Wright and Cropanzano [5] noted emotional exhaustion to have negative and significant impact on job performance. However, the experience of emotional exhaustion may then encourage employees to prevent future resource loss by engaging in protective mechanisms [6]. Workplace friendship is described as voluntary relationships that exist primarily for enjoyment and satisfaction rather than for the fulfilment of a particular function or role [7]. This unique interpersonal relationship is that employees have the freedom to develop and maintain with one another beyond their formal roles without external forces within the organization. Therefore, workplace friendship represents a degree of voluntary interdependence, mutual concern, and interest [8]. Studies around workplace friendship generally include two dimensions: friendship opportunity and friendship prevalence (actual friendship at the workplace) [9]. Some studies pointed out workplace friendship can lead to positive work attitude or behavior. For example, Tse et al. [10] argued that workplace friendship creates high-quality team-member exchange relationships since can trust and value each other and share their interests. This emotional and instrumental supports make them believe workplace friendship is a valuable mean of growth and dependence.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is one of famous topic. Many related meta-analysis studies have been conducted [11] [12] [13]. In general, OCB refers to behaviors which more than expected by the organization and the demands of the organization. These behaviors are not only in role behaviors but also extra role behaviors [14]. However, this study concentrated on the dimension of OCBI. Williams and Anderson's research [15] divided OCB into two dimensions: OCBO and OCBI. OCBI (organizational citizenship behavior of individuals) refers to behaviors that immediately benefit specific individuals and indirectly through this means contribute to the organization. OCBI is influenced by some motivations or personal trait [16] [17]. It can be increased by the fulfilment of external means such company welfare [18].

The Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion, Workplace Friendship and OCBI

Considering the relationship between emotional exhaustion and OCBI, many studies supported the negative relationship between two variables. For example, Cohen and Abedallah [19] demonstrated that burnout negatively affected OCB. Chiu & Tsai [20] explored the effects of all three dimensions of job burnout, including emotional exhaustion, on combined construct of OCB in Taiwan. Consequently, this study proposed:

H1: Emotional exhaustion has negative effect on OCBI.

The positive relationship between workplace friendship and OCBI has been supported by many studies. Since friendship at the workplace provides support, a sense of belonging, and identity, the group workplace friendship would be positively related to group OCBI (G-OCBI) [21]. Bowler and Brass [22] proposed that friendship can influence the performance and receipt of OCBI. Therefore, this study suggested:

H2: Workplace friendship has positive effect on OCBI.

However, the study of Cropanzano et al. [23] found that emotional exhaustion has significant negative effect on OCBO while no relationship or highly insignificant relationship between job burnout and OCBS (OCB beneficial to supervisor) was found. Khalid et al. [24] found that emotional exhaustion has negative effect on OCBO as well, but there is no support to the significant effect on OCBI. This suggested the relationship between emotional exhaustion may be moderated by some influential factor. This study suggested workplace friendship may play the moderating role. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was proposed as follow:

H3: Workplace friendship has the moderating effect on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and OCBI.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Framework

Based on the research aims and the literature review, this study proposed the following research framework, shown in Figure 1, to investigate the moderating effect of workplace friendship on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and OCBI.

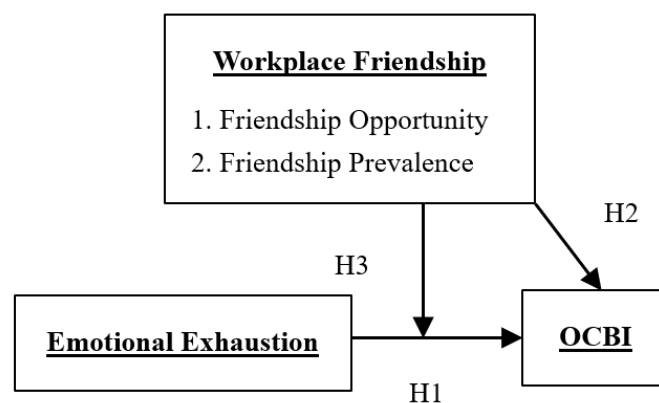


Figure 1 Research Framework

The Measurement

The measurement of Emotional Exhaustion was revised from Maslach and Jackson's study [25]. Eight questions were used ($\alpha = 0.942$). The Workplace Friendship measurement was based on the study of Nielsen et al. [9], which was divided into two dimensions, namely " Friendship Opportunity" ($\alpha = 0.881$) with five questions and " Friendship Prevalence" ($\alpha = 0.907$) with four questions. Because the measurement of OCB mainly focuses on OCBI, it refers to the part of the scale of Williams and Anderson's study [15], with a total of five questions ($\alpha = 0.876$).

The rating scale used the Likert 5-point score. The scales are divided into 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 point. They are representative strongly agree, agree, no difference, disagree, and strongly disagree, respectively.

Sampling

The research targeting group of this study is the preschool teachers in Tainan City, Taiwan. The questionnaires were distributed by convenient sampling from January to February 2021. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 307 valid questionnaires were returned, with a valid responding rate of 76.8%.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Data

In Table 1, the information of demographic variables, including gender, age, marriage, education level, seniority, and position in company, were demonstrated.

Table 1 Demographic Information of Samples

| Variable | Item | Frequency | % |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|----|
| Age | Under 30 | 83 | 27 |
| | 31-40 | 89 | 29 |
| | Over 41 | 135 | 44 |
| Education Level | College and Under | 120 | 39 |
| | Bachelor and above | 187 | 61 |
| Marriage | Single | 131 | 43 |
| | Married | 176 | 57 |
| Monthly Income | NT 30,000 and Below | 161 | 52 |
| | NT 30,001 and Above | 146 | 48 |
| Seniority in Preschool System | 0-5 years | 101 | 33 |
| | 6-15 years | 101 | 33 |
| | Over 16 years | 105 | 34 |

Descriptive Analysis and Corelation Analysis

In Table 2, the mean and standard deviation values of research dimensions pointed out that the respondents have lower mean of emotional exhaustion ($m = 2.726$). The mean value of friendship opportunity is higher than friendship prevalence ($4.211 > 3.870$). Meanwhile, the level of OCBI is litter higher ($m = 4.127$). With regard to the results of correlation analysis, all research dimensions are related at certain level ($-0.282 \leq r \leq 0.632$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2 The Results of Descriptive Analysis and Correlation Analysis

| Variable / Dimension | # | Mean | SD | EE | FO | FP | OCBI |
|----------------------|----|-------|-------|----------|----|----|------|
| Emotional Exhaustion | EE | 2.726 | 0.921 | 1 | | | |
| Workplace Friendship | FO | 4.211 | 0.631 | -0.212** | 1 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|-------|-------|----------|---------|-------|---|
| | FP | 3.870 | 0.813 | -0.282** | 0.632** | 1 | |
| OCB | OCBI | 4.127 | 0.560 | -0.200** | 0.542** | 0.466 | 1 |
| | | | | | | ** | |

EE: emotional exhaustion, FO: friendship opportunity, FP: friendship prevalence, OCBI: organizational citizenship behavior to individuals. Note: * = $p < 0.05$ ** = $p < 0.01$ *** = $p < 0.001$

Regression Analysis

In Table 3 to Table 4, the results of regression analysis were demonstrated. All equations with OCBI as dependent variable were significant since F values were significant ($p < 0.01$). Meanwhile, demographic variables, emotional exhaustion and dimensions of workplace friendship were independent variables in all regression equations. Because of the page limitation, the β values of demographic variables were not presented in the following tables.

In Table 3, the result of E1 pointed out that emotional exhaustion (EE, $\beta = -0.181$, $p < 0.01$) has negative and significantly effect to OCBI. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Regarding the effect of workplace friendship in E2 and E3, including friendship opportunity (FO, $\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.001$) and friendship prevalence (FP, $\beta = 0.465$, $p < 0.001$) were significantly related to OCBI. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported as well.

Table 3 The Main Effect of EE, FO, and FP on OCBI

| | E1 | E2 | E3 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| EE | -0.181** | | |
| FO | | 0.522*** | |
| FP | | | 0.465*** |
| F | 3.668** | 19.562*** | 14.689*** |
| R² | 0.079 | 0.314 | 0.256 |
| Adj. R² | 0.058 | 0.298 | 0.238 |

Note: * = $p < 0.05$ ** = $p < 0.01$ *** = $p < 0.001$

In Table 4, considering the interaction effect, the moderating effect of EE and FP ($\beta = -0.154$, $p < 0.01$) was significantly related to OCBI. Meanwhile, the moderating effect of EE and FP ($\beta = -0.184$, $p < 0.001$) was significantly related to OCBI as well. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. In detail, regardless of the level of EE, the effect of FO is greater when EE is low. However, the effect of FP is greater when EE is high.

Table 4 The Result of Moderating Effect Analysis

| | E4 | E5 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| EE | -0.056 | -0.050 |
| FO | 0.530*** | |
| FP | | 0.479*** |
| EE*FO | -0.154** | |
| EE*FP | | -0.184*** |
| F | 17.207*** | 13.577*** |
| R² | 0.343 | 0.291 |
| Adj. R² | 0.323 | 0.270 |

Note: * = $p < 0.05$ ** = $p < 0.01$ *** = $p < 0.001$

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

With respect to the results of descriptive analysis, the mean value of emotional exhaustion is 2.726, ranging from average to disagree. It hinted that the respondents may believe that engaging in preschool education system is quite valuable. Therefore, even though preschool teachers belong to emotional labor, they may make appropriate emotional adjustment in order to continue to face the daily challenges. The overall mean score of workplace friendship is 4.041, with friendship opportunity is 4.211 and friendship prevalence is 3.870. It indicates that there are opportunities to communicate with colleagues at work, and establish friendships. The mean score of OCBI is 4.127. Among the questionnaire items of OCBI, the mean score of helping absent colleagues is the highest. In order to cooperate with the smooth operation of the kindergarten, many details of the work content in the field of preschool education system cannot be clearly explained in the job description. In addition to the daily standard work, the preschool teachers also need to adjust the daily work content and deal with the unexpected situation of parents and children every day. Therefore, there are many extra efforts. In order to avoid the supervisor's accusation of personal work, the respondents will take the initiative to complete someone's work.

With regard to the relationship between emotional exhaustion, workplace friendship and OCBI, the results were demonstrated similar finding to previous studies. That means emotional exhaustion is negatively related to OCBI and workplace friendship is positively related to OCBI. Therefore, when recruiting in kindergartens, it will be better to recruit more experienced senior preschool teachers, or recruit those who have energy and enthusiasm for personality traits which are interested in early childhood education. In addition, selection process can focus on professional competencies via teaching demonstrations. Once preschool teachers have professional competencies with appropriate personal traits, emotional exhaustion is less likely to happen. Meanwhile, the workplace friendship is good to OCBI. Kindergartens can encourage staffs to communicate with each other and hold related activities so that colleagues have more opportunities to know each other. In addition, it is better to encourage preschool teachers to share experience, so that teachers of different classes can communicate with each other, and even carry out class switch, so that preschool teacher has the opportunity to meet other colleagues. It also increases the sense of belonging in the group through cooperation with different colleagues to learn different teaching experiences.

When emotional exhaustion and workplace friendship are considered simultaneously, workplace friendship has greater influence on OCBI. Therefore, how to increase the level of workplace friendship is more important than how to decrease the level of emotional exhaustion. Regarding to the moderating effect of workplace friendship, friendship prevalence has greater effect than friendship opportunity. Consequently, it is important to increase the sense of trust among preschool teachers. Even though there are more friendship opportunities, it is necessary to establish a solid and deep friendship.

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